

## Boucher Celebrates the Formal Opening of the Whitetop Community Health Clinic (October 7, 2006)

### STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RICK BOUCHER

Whitetop Community Health Clinic

October 7, 2006

Whitetop, Virginia

I am pleased to return to Whitetop today to join with Whitetop residents and Grayson County officials in the opening of Whitetop Community Health, the clinic located in the Whitetop Community Services Facility. The opening of this clinic has been a long standing goal of the residents of Whitetop, and today we celebrate the culmination of the efforts of countless community members. With the addition of this clinic, Whitetop residents will now have access to healthcare services currently unavailable in the community.

The clinic opening today is approximately 700 square feet in size, and it includes two exam rooms for patient visits. A nurse practitioner will be located in the facility full time as well as two additional staff members, and the clinic will be open Monday-Wednesday and Friday from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM and Thursday from 10:30 to 7:00 PM to accommodate patients who cannot visit the clinic during regular business hours.

Whitetop Community Health will serve an area with a population of nearly 8000 residents in the Mount Rogers Community, many of whom are migrant or seasonal farm workers. It is expected that there will be more than 2000 patient visits in the clinic's first year. Many patients will be uninsured or under-insured, and the clinic will provide medical services on a sliding fee scale basis.

Patients will be able to receive a number of medical services at this facility including pediatric, adolescent, adult and geriatric care, laboratory services, emergency medicine, annual physicals, and minor surgeries.

Whitetop Community Health is a non-profit community health center, which is managed by Southwest Virginia Community Health Systems, Inc. In addition to the clinic here in Whitetop, this organization provides healthcare to residents across the region at clinics in Saltville, Troutdale, Bristol and Tazewell. Southwest Virginia Community Health Systems receives funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through its Health Resources and Services Administration to provide health care services to Southwest Virginians regardless of ability to pay.

I would like to take this opportunity to comment on The Whitetop Community Services Facility, which houses the clinic. The facility is the result of a planning effort organized by the Mount Rogers Community Improvement Club along with the Grayson County Board of Supervisors and the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. The new facility is 12,000

square feet in size and will house a number of agencies providing services to Whitetop residents including the clinic opening today and a library as well as other programs.

The Whitetop Community Services Facility is nearing completion, and tenants are now leasing the property and beginning to provide services. In addition to Whitetop Community Health, the Whitetop Branch of the Wythe-Grayson Regional Library will be located in the facility as well as Rooftop Community Action Program of Virginia's Head Start and Community Outreach operations, District III Governmental Cooperative's Nutrition Program, and the Virginia Employment Commission's Workforce Center branch office.

Space in the Facility will also be available for use by other agencies and organizations for meetings and programs. The Virginia Department of Health will use the facility to provide Family Planning, Immunizations, and WIC services. The Facility will also host the meetings of the Whitetop Senior Citizens Association, the Christmas Tree Growers Association, and the Mount Rogers Community Improvement Club. Additionally, local residents will be able to rent space for conferences, reunions, weddings and other special events.

The total cost of the Whitetop Community Services Facility is more than \$1.7 million. Federal funding has been provided at my request in the amount of \$1.3 million from several federal funding sources. The Appalachian Regional Commission has provided a grant of \$500,000, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Development Agency has provided two provisions of funding totaling \$146,000. Additionally, the facility has received a Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$700,000 to construct the facility.

Several other organizations provided the remaining cost of the facility. The Virginia Tobacco Commission provided \$75,000, Southeast Rural Community Action Program provided \$62,000, Mount Rogers Planning District Commission provided \$19,463 from their Water and Wastewater assistance program, the Vaughan Foundation provided \$2500, and the Mount Rogers Community Improvement Club contributed more than \$200,000 to complete the funding package. Southwest Virginia Community Health Systems has provided \$6000 for the clinic section of the facility.

The funding has been used to design and construct the 12,000 square foot facility. It has also been used to provide a well system and install a septic system for the building. The Mount Rogers Community Improvement Club has donated countless hours of labor to complete painting and other work on the facility. The Club has even provided chestnut paneling made from lumber salvaged from the original property for the building.

The opening of Whitetop Community Health is another step forward in our goal of expanding access to health care across Southwest Virginia. Now, Whitetop residents can receive primary health care services in their community that were previously unavailable.

I would like to recognize a number of individuals who have been instrumental in the success we celebrate today.

I would like to thank Howard Chapman, Executive Director of Southwest Virginia Community Health Systems, Inc., Shirley Carter, Chair of the organization's Board of Directors, and other members of the Board for their commitment to providing high quality health care services to individuals across the region.

I also want to thank Dave Barrett, Executive Director of the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, and his excellent staff for their assistance in the planning and construction of the facility.

The Grayson County Board of Supervisors deserves our recognition today for its commitment to this project over several years. Bill Ring, Grayson County Administrator, and Don Young, former County Administrator, also deserve thanks today.

I want to thank James Sonny Buchanan, President of the Mount Rogers Community Improvement Club, and the Club's other members for their tireless efforts to complete the Facility. Beryl Greer and Dean Richardson also deserve thanks for lending special equipment and skills necessary to complete the project.

Finally, I would like to thank my District Director Laura Lee for her persistent and persuasive efforts in support of this project.

The opening of the Whitetop Community Health is an outstanding achievement for the residents of the Whitetop. I want to thank everyone here for their role in this success and offer special congratulations to the Whitetop residents who benefit greatly from the availability of these services.